

MARSH-MARIGOLD



MARSH-MARIGOLD, COWSLIP

BUTTERCUP FAMILY

Flowers larger than in true buttercups (1-1½ in.); the 5 to 9 deep yellow "petals" are really sepals. Leaves glossy, roundish or kidney-shaped. Stem thick, hollow, succulent. 8-24 in. Swamps, brooksides. Most of our area.

Caltha palustris
(Ranunculaceae)

APRIL-JUNE





BRIAN DELLER

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Columbus OH

4 3 2 0 1

IEATFOOD123@

HOTMAIL.COM

(Duh)



WRITTEN
IRONICALLY
THIS HAS BEEN
GRIOT ~~NUMBER~~ NUMBER
THREE

APRIL 2005

THANKS TO: THE REAL
LEE MARTIN EMILIES THE
ENGLISH BOBBY JOE SWAMP THING
268

ON
VALENTINES
DAY

Back copies still available!

FREE
FREE
FREE

griot # 1:
Atrocious youthful passion and layout
dreams and anecdotal stories of no significance

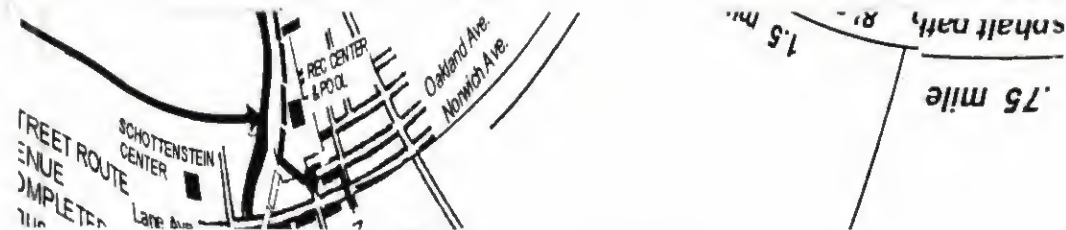
griot # 2:
My year abroad, in search of America
contributions from geoff of defiance, ohio
chock full 'o folklore and rebellion

More issues coming soon!

griot # 4:
"Arawak City" all Columbus stories edition
An end of an era for young griot brian?

w/ return postage as many as you
fucking want!

Communication is **STILL** crucial



1.

There is this old Cometbus zine that seems fitting. In it is a short essay that must be his most loved piece of writing. I've seen it photocopied and taped up on bedroom walls quite often. "Punk Rock Love Is" is its title. Cometbus lists the so called "pure moments" he will always remember from a whirlwind romance he had with an older punk while in high school. My favorite line, which I think sums it all up is "Punk rock love is a collection of those pure moments you remember no matter what happens the morning after. The end of the story isn't always the most important part. I think it's a relationship stripped to its essentials." I have a sharpie in my hand and I know a few more that should be added to the photocopy on my wall.

2.

"Do you know the boy in this photo"? A blurry photograph was shoved into my face. It seemed to have materialized out of nowhere.

"Umm, let me look at that". I took from her a portrait of a handsome lad clad in black. Scrutinizing his facial features, I racked my brain for a recollection of this young man. Shaking my head, I handed the photo back to the girl before me. She was as tall as I was, with a septum piercing and a shock of bleached blond hair. She was kind of cute and more importantly, a punk.

"That's Bobby Joe Scarecrow. I drove all the way here from Minneapolis with my friend, Emily, just to find him." Into her book bag back went the photo of Bobby Joe. "His real name is Bobby Joe Watkins. Bobby's originally from Arkansas. Last I know he was living in Columbus."

"Wait, why is he called Scarecrow?" I inquired.

"Cause he's skinny and...well, tall like a scarecrow,"

"Ah, I see." I was squinting and it must have looked like I was smiling. It was noon and once again beautiful out. It had been so the entire week.

"I wish I could help you, but the face doesn't seem familiar." Despite my lack of knowledge, there was a smile in return.

"I'm Brian by the way," I was embarrassed I had not introduced myself, "What's your name?"

"Emily" She responded. By instinct we awkwardly shook hands. "And that," pointing to her companion, who had looked oddly familiar, "...Is Emily too." A freckled face framed by a black bowl of Ramones-esque hair popped out from a book bag her friend was scrounging in to

greet me. This Emily looked as if she could have been anywhere in age from 16 to 26. I began laughing. During the summer I had a romance with another Emily as well. Parents are so unimaginative. Everyone my age seems to have the same four names. Had *Time Magazine* in the early '80s listed the perfect four names in their pages explaining how they would make your children rich and successful? Maybe that's why the Brians and the Emilies of the world would rebel and become punks.

Minutes before I was standing atop the monumental granite step of Sullivant Hall Library. I had finished my early afternoon routine checking of the email. Stepping out to face the constant flow of High Street traffic, momentarily I was blinded by a cloudless sky's worth of sun shine. When I regained my vision I saw them pulling their bicycles onto the sidewalk across the way. One looked like someone familiar whom I hadn't seen in weeks. Upon noticing what was supposed to be a friend, I instinctually began down the steps. Quickly I realized it was not who I thought it was, but in fact a look-alike. There was a split second between continuing on my way that day or investigating who they were. The decision that made their story became mine as well.

Maybe it was harmless curiosity that made me cross the street to meet them. Maybe I am no better than any other male as my hormones prodded me onward. I think it was something more. I knew they were not from here. Nobody ever hangs out at the benches at 14th and High except for the home bums and drunken frat types at bar 'o clock. I would know. I have walked by that spot at least four times a day for the last four years. My home is mere footsteps away. And how did I know they were punks? All I can say is it takes being one to know one from the crowd. And I've been "one" for awhile now.

There's a special bond between punks. Once I was in love with a punk rocker who entered the tribe in 1983 after seeing S.O.D. She was five at the time and two decades later she told me this. Back before punk rock was ever etched upon compact discs, if you ran into one on the street, they'd probably say "Hi" and have liberty spikes and at least one Subhumans patch. They were more likely then to have been poor or working class. A punk on the sidewalk meant an instant friend. It was necessary she said. Friendship was a means of survival. Being punk was almost a form of suicide back then. Nowadays it's an industry and fratboys are the only ones probably who will still kick the shit out of you just because you look like one. But they'll kick the shit out of everyone indiscriminately. That's how it goes around here in the student ghetto of Columbus, Ohio. The limits of what is "punk" have expanded to include much more in terms of music and people than what it ever did in 1983. After the fratboys are done kicking the shit out of you, they'll go home to listen to their New Found Glory "punk rock" cd. I can't bemoan missing an era I never could have known, and probably existed only in her fictionalized memory. But despite it, crossing the street and saying hi to those two mysterious familiar looking females just seemed like the right thing to do. I'll let stories of the past, of those who have carried this underground tradition to me,

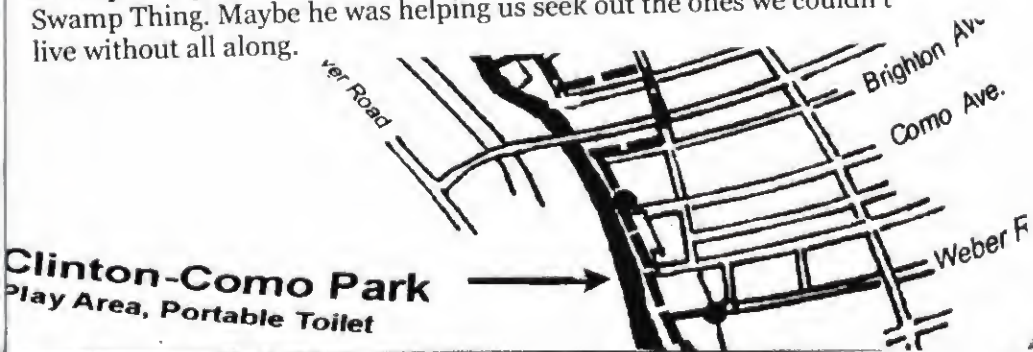
I can guarantee that when those two were flying down the highway together, the euphoria in those moments must have been overwhelming. Maybe it was like riding a bike finally free of training wheels or leaving home for the first time. These moments are worth remembering. The moments between breaths where hearts stop beating. All mixed up with dread, excitement, hesitation, fear and anticipation. When the road signs for Columbus must have appeared, the feelings inside that Cadillac barreling down the highway must have been narcotic. At that moment there was no going back until that boy was found. Maybe this blindness will kill all of us off and punk rock will cease to exist. There will be no one left to pass it along. Everyone will have ridden willingly ignorant into oncoming traffic, thinking it was love. I can't say this story ended happily ever after. But I feel the happiest endings are the ones that grant us another day and the promise of tomorrow.



Sure Swamp Thing's abilities would be great. But could we ever experience what Emily Jean did on that trip? Love is the emotional essence for our existence. But in a way, so is heartbreak. Sometimes it can just as satisfying as love. They're like opposite ends of the year, opposing seasons that turn time relentlessly forward. I may be unfit to talk in that it was not me risking my fragile heart in those two days, but I have been there. 22 years of puzzle pieces that just don't fit together. Yet I still blindly trust in the noisy blasts of passion coming from vinyl grooves on my record player. The excitement of opening the cover of a comic book for the first time might be likened to the promise of new love. If that sounds right, then the closing of the other side is a release that allows us to search out new stories. Winter makes sure there will be another summer. And yet, these distinctions are not so rigid. Time moves in circles just like our lives. Sequels are written everyday

Comic books are not like life at all. Life is intrinsically more confusing, complicated and thrilling. Our inability to deal with our fate, our lack of foresight becomes the most endearing qualities we have. I will revel in my blindness, my ability which engenders our greatest ability to love. I may not be able to communicate with all of earth's vegetation, but I the love I can feel will trump the Swamp Thing's any day. Even if it's as short lived as the spring's wetland wildflowers, the chance to find them after the months of grey winter is worth it. I think the Emilies were more like sisters than friends; Siamese twins than mere companions. I hear these days that Emily C. plans to follow her heart to the west coast on romantic quests of her own. And she is dragging along a friend who just happens to have the same name. I can't decide if these things are insanely blind or lucid in their passion. Somehow it must be the same. I can say I'll keep trying and won't make any distinctions.

While sitting with her letter in my hand, I began visualizing these events how they occurred. I wonder how many friends I have who know the "Emilies". Probably more than I realize. I conjecture that all punks in North America are probably connected to one another by one or two degrees. I could have a place to stay, a bike to borrow and a friendly face to sing Crass lyrics drunkenly with in every state of this nation (and beyond). If I lost my love I knew whom I could turn to. I think Emily J. knew that her love would not be lost for very long. All of our punk rock friends scattered across the country resembles the Swamp Thing's plant like consciousness. Perhaps I've underrated Swamp Thing. Maybe he was helping us seek out the ones we couldn't live without all along.



be an inspiration. This is why I should have crossed through it, but I probably just thought they were cute.

"Sweet Jesus, you are not fucking serious! So what's this all about, who is this kid? What's so special about him" I implored

"This boy is my love," Emily, who is known as Emily J. began her tale. "I was in an antique shop with my girlfriends when I saw him. He was buying an accordion," Somehow I looked trusting enough to hear the details of her forlorn love that had brought her here. "All I can say is it was love at first sight. I called off work to stay with him through the weekend. We were inseparable. When I finally had to go back to Boston where I was living at the time, we promised to stay in contact. And we did, we talked nearly everyday. Then he stopped calling me for some reason and I lost his phone number. I haven't heard from him since"



"Hmm," I looked down, trying not to betray my inner thoughts. It sounded odd, almost unbelievable of a way to lose your love. I was skeptically silent. She continued on,

"I didn't know anyone that would have a way to get back in touch with Bobby Joe. He always promised, that one day, when he could get things together, he'd come to Minneapolis, where I moved later, and find me. We would go away together. I was so in love with that boy. I just couldn't let him go. So I'm doing what he said he would do first. Now I am here in your city asking you where to find him."

It could have just been another quirky encounter of what happened to me on the street to tell friends about later. I had made the literal steps that would entangle me in what was to be a romantic epic tinged with punk rock. This is the stuff that inspired the great bards and poets throughout the ages. Rimbaud, Neruda, Rilke, eat your fucking heart out.



A half an hour must have went by as I stood there conversing with Emily J. and her partner who is known as Emily C. After wishing them luck in finding Bobby Joe, I cut a path back through traffic to the other side of the street. Not before admitting that I crossed High Street just to see who they were. I guess they got a kick out of that. They were even making a documentary of it all. A video camera was borrowed and brought to interview all those met along to find Bobby Joe. It was to be called "Where the Hell is Bobby Joe Scarecrow?" I gave them the address of my house and told them they could pitch their tent and camp out for as long as it took. They gave me their cell phone number and told me to call if anything cool was going on in the next few days. Unlocking my bicycle that was in front of Sullivant Hall, I squinted and saw them pushing the photograph into faces of strangers.

"That's the most fucking awesome thing I have heard in a long time." I sighed, shaking my head back and forth as I placed the U-lock in my satchel. I deftly straddled my bike, its aluminum frame glinting in the sun, and rode for the bike path. I smiled the whole way there.

3.

What drives someone to embark on crusades such as this? Would this chance at love be worth it? What was to become Emily and Emily? I daydreamed and contemplated, lying in the Park of Roses, under the branching fingers of a massive oak tree. This is where the bike trail took me after the morning's chance encounter, not before swinging by Wild Oats to shoplift a vegan cookie and a soda to wash it down. Staring at the interlocking infinity of the canopy above me, I thought of all the possibilities. Out of all the chaos, the endless chronology of failure and the inability to fit into any kind of life that makes sense how is it possible that there's still a capacity to fall head over heels in love. With someone, something, anything; I'm surprised it's even possible. Even if it usually only lasts for days if not hours. Or even just minutes, I think it has to be the reason spring still comes after winter. There was something in her voice that betrayed a suspicion within me that she had not thought out the possible outcomes of this endeavor. And that made it all the more endearing and perfect. The things we do for love must be the bravest and stupidest actions we take.



scene from a heartbreaking ballad by Bruce Springsteen. As he went down those steps, I swear he shot a look my way. It looked right through me, the face, the one I now remembered from the photograph shoved in my face, was inscrutable.

In the letter Emily mentions how Bobby Joe was arrested at the Bush rally in Columbus. It took place blocks away from the North Market on the eve of the election. When he got off of work he went down to protest to heckle the president. He was arrested but not before the cops beat the shit out of him. Everyone looked on as Bobby screamed democracy between the blows. He spent a weekend in jail before being charged for "obstructing the peace". The police officers joked how he wasn't going to get to vote. He now faces up to three months of jail time if convicted. Lately, Emily J. and Bobby Joe have been talking more.

I've been thinking, oddly enough, a lot about Swamp Thing. And it's not just that I finished reading the last of the graphic novels this month. It's nearing St Valentine's day and I wish I could feel the vigor I had during that day I helped Emily J. and Emily C. I don't have the energy or the resolution to brave the cold to steal vegan cookies from Wild Oats. I don't even have the time anymore. I wonder what the Swamp Thing does in the winter. What if we could sense anything living any place in the world like Swamp Thing? We could just grow, like he does in the comic, a new body out of the butternut squash in the produce department and nonchalantly saunter over to the other side of the store. Grabbing a handful of vegan cookies and dashing for the exit just to stir everyone up, we could make it to the safety of the OSU wetlands in no time. There, Abigail Arcane would be waiting with open arms, for vegan cookies of course. We could wait it out till when the danger of the last thaw was gone. In these few weeks we could see the native spring wildflowers bloom around us again. Greeted by the swamp buttercups, marsh marigolds, wild ginger blossoms and dutchman's breeches; their fleeting beauty would once again tell us it time again to move on.

their hands. The third was of me and Emily T trying to float on our backs in the dark water. All that could be seen of me was my head and of Emily were her head and her breasts, floating above the water like buoys. I choked with laughter, startling my roommate.

"What. What is it?" He inquired, confused.

"Oh, it's nothing."

I unfolded the handwritten letter and began reading, learning what ensued after they passed me that night outside the show. They were both getting pretty frustrated and tired so the Emilies decided on resorting to the "super creepy" approach in her words. They had been searching for too long and gave in. Emily and Emily waited in front of his house until Bobby Joe came home. His new girlfriend was with him. What she had tried to dodge was unavoidable I guess. It was weird she said and she pretended "he was just a friend". It was the first time she had seen him in months. All this build up only to have to walk on tip toes. After five seconds Emily C. had turned the video camera off. They went back to the drunk Christian hipster's poop filled backyard camp ground. Later, she wrote, Bobby Joe came to their tent to talk to her again. He confessed that he was still in love with her despite the new girlfriend. He said how desperate he was when he found himself stranded in Columbus. I guess she was a safety net that caught him. As he began to get to know her his resentment grew. Now it is one that traps. He never stopped loving Emily. That is where it got "complicated" in her words. She was left with that to take to bed cursing the skies that belonged to Christopher Columbus. The next morning Emily realized she was broke(\$). It was becoming too much for her. She could not believe the things that Bobby Joe had said to her. The reason that Bobby stopped calling, he told her was that she had said to never call her again in anger one night when she was blacked out drunk on the phone. She had no recollection of ever saying that. Emily spent most of the day bawling, which according to her is something rare. Emily gave Bobby Joe a goodbye letter and hit the road with her friend, missing the party. Enough was enough. Bikes hanging on the rear, the Cadillac cut a path back up north. Within twenty four hours the Emilies were back home in Minneapolis.

11.

Bobby Joe always seemed more like a ghost than a real person. Though his flesh and blood was tragically real for her, he seemed like some sort of spectre to me. I've only seem him with my own eyes probably four times. The last time I was on the bus, riding it downtown since my bicycle was broken. It was not so long after the events of those two days. When I got on by campus I spied him toward the back of the bus. He was looking dreamily out the window, transfixed, glassy eyed. Was he dreaming of Emily I wondered? I still felt weird about the whole situation so I sat down before he could recognize me. At King and High, his lanky black clad figure deftly glided to front of the bus and disembarked. He had a bass guitar slung across his back. It was like a

I ripped open the wrapper and began taking bites out of my cookie. I resumed reading my Swamp Thing comic on that fine day lying in the warm September shade. Swamp Thing would have been able to find his love, Abigail Arcane, so easily if he would have lost her phone number. Since his senses are in all that is plant life, he would have found her in seconds. His eyes and ears are practically everywhere at once. You wouldn't even need to use a phone to communicate, let alone look for her, when your consciousness is in every blade of grass, piece of algae and mold particle. I guess that would negate the need to embark on tenuous and romantically frightening endeavors such as Emily J's. How boring is that. I'll take the meaning in the fallibilities of our emotions and our physical limitations over being the Swamp Thing any day.

I put my comic down and began the search for a blank sheet of paper in my bag. Pulling the pen from my pocket, I began constructing what every out of towners needs when stumbling into a strange city for the first time. I drew a black line down the center of the page, splitting it in half. This was the natural way to begin a map of Columbus. High Street is the defining geographic feature. It splits the city directly in half and everything can be found in reference to it. High Street is the main artery that all of its people flow through to get where their hearts lie. It's a horizontal existence we live here. I took it upon myself for the next hour to draft an imperfect pictorial guide to assist them in their adventures in my fair town. Homemade maps are of much more use than anything from a store. I've received them many times during my stumblings across the country. I cut High Street up into section by its major dissecting avenues; Hudson, Lane, 5th, North Broadway. I put all the spots needed to be known for travelers. Greyhound station, train tracks and yard, places that throw food into their dumpsters, parks, bike trails, apartment complex swimming pools, bike shops, free computer access, libraries, copy shops, cheap eats, vegan/vegetarian eats, good places to hang out and drink coffee, the food co-op, corporate stores to steal from, stores not to steal from. A total punk rock guide to the city. It was a beautiful work and I was quite proud of myself.

I dialed up the Emilies to see if they wanted to go on a bike ride with me the next afternoon. "Of course", they said, sounding really excited on the phone. We agreed upon 11:30 at the Cup 'O Joe coffee shop north of the university.



4.

Cutting out onto High Street, I weaved in and out of traffic the next morning. Making my way north, dashing through red lights in the lack of oncoming traffic, I was excited. My carefully drawn map, one that would help these romantic souls enjoy their stay here if not make them feel welcome, was tucked into the bag slung across my back. Not even half way to our rendezvous point, I heard a familiar voice burst out into the roadway.

"HEEYY! BRIAAAAN!" The nasally cadence of a Minnesotan accent revealed the nature of the assailing announcement. I kept on going so as not to be flattened by the flowing traffic. Circling around after the first driveway, I rolled down the sidewalk to meet my misplaced new friends.

"You're in the wrong place." I smirked, as I greeted them, perched upon a brick wall in front of McDonald's. Their bikes were resting adjacent to them on the ledge they were seated upon. It looked like they had already found their coffee and were finishing their breakfast. I rooted through my messenger bag to produce the artifact that I had spent last afternoon crafting.

"Check this out. I made this for you two. It's to help you navigate during your stay here." Emily J. And Emily C. proceeded to gawk at the map together and make these incredible sounding laughs. They were quite amused by it, pointing at different landmarks and laughing. The lovesick Emily gave me a hug and shoved the map into her backpack.

"So where are we going today" buzzed the Emily that had freckles, grabbing her teal road bike and pointing it at the street.

"The best place to ride bikes in Columbus...the bike path," I replied, shining. The three of us made a cordon through a gap in traffic.

"Just wait till we get to the end."

We rode three abreast most of the bike path until we came to northern limit. The seven miles that it took to get there, seemed like seconds. They caught me up on the progress on the hunt for Bobby Joe. As it turned out they got hooked up with a place to stay that was a mere blocks from where he lived. It was true. The lost love was still living in Columbus after all. Emily J's gamble had won out. Soon after I left they found someone who was a drinking buddy of Bobby Joe. They talked him into letting the two pitched their tent in his backyard. Emily J refused to come this far just use the "knock on his door approach". It was mainly because of this reason.


Old Bobby Joe had a new girlfriend.

Rethinking her strategy she wanted to find Bobby Joe alone by himself. Confrontation with the new girlfriend persisted as a possibility as well as a nuisance. She needed to work around this new factor. What had she gotten herself into? "What am I doing?" "What am I gonna say when I see him now?" and "Maybe this was all a mistake" were all

Slipping the letter back out of its multicolored envelope, three photographs fell out of the homemade canvas envelope. One was myself, naked, sitting by Antrim Lake, arms resting on my knees. My mouth was a mischievous smirk. The other, well the other was Emily C, topless, and Emily J, not topless, making the letters my initials with

9-22-04

Where in the HELL is Bobby Joe Scarecrow



AKA (Bobby Joe Watkins)

I came to
Columbus from
Minneapolis to
find him.

if you know of Bobby's whereabouts
please PLEASE call Emily @

turn out. Pointed out to me by someone who knew him that I had told the tale to, I scanned the backyard. And there he was. Looking upon his features and remembering the photo shoved in my face the day before, I realized that I did in fact know the kid. Though I wouldn't have been able to tell you his name before, I knew him how one knows half of their punk scene. Random party, random show or random crossing of paths on the sidewalk.

"So you're Bobby Joe" I nonchalantly made what ended up sounding like a declarative statement. I studied his facial features. I can't believe I didn't recognize him from the photograph.

"Yup, that's me" He replied as coolly and nonchalantly as me. He was a handsome one, and like the photo, dressed all in black.

"So I heard about the whole cross country quest to find you, I met those two." It was yesterday we had biked all over Columbus and this was today. Something bad had happened and I knew the Emilies were no longer in Ohio. "How was it seeing them?" My word choice was so inconspicuous and vague.

"Oh, it was OK, I guess, they left today." His reply was equally so. I realized this was the first time we had spoken to each other, I didn't really know him at all. He was a stranger yet I felt so connected to him. I was over stepping my boundaries on what was possibly a sensitive issue. I smiled and said,

"Cool, I hope everything went ok. Enjoy the party."

What a tedious and evasive conversation. It had not gone well at all. Coupled with the Emilies' absence and their flight from the city, I knew in my heart, that the fated reunion went terribly. Truth is I felt that it was heading toward that all along, and that I had collaborated in any anguish that Emily J. had incurred. My punk nature had blinded me, joining in on the fun, trying to make the impossible real. I went to get another cup of PBR, dodging the bodies and fireworks leaping out of the window above, but the keg was tapped. I walked back inside and sat down on the couch.

10.

Before my eyes could locate the return address, I knew the sender of this letter. Plopping myself down on the couch I had found next to the dumpster of my own apartment building, I began depicting the series of events that would finally be resolved within this envelope. Now in the midst of the dull gloom of another mid-Ohio winter, had time passed so fast? Had I already forgotten the awe I felt with them. I was lost in mediocrity, sheltered by an unrelenting dome of February grey.

"So this is the end," I sighed. I put the page and half letter down. In the lines of her handwriting, the pain of rejection was real. Yet, between the words, I could detect a sense of satisfaction and relief. How I became intertwined I'm not so sure. All that was written finished a most epic tale of spurned love. But all things left unsaid told a different story. To live and to fail is better than to avoid and regret. I hope it's true that Emily Jean's heart is now set free.

questions she must have grappled with that first night, camping mere houses away from him. Bobby Joe shared an alley with this house. What if he stumbled by and recognized the inhabitants of this tent city? I wondered how much sleep Emily J. got that night.

She seemed so confident and resolute on that bike ride. Despite the new development in her plan, she was having a heck of a time. I could tell. They both seemed happy to have taken this step into an un navigated region faintly resembling a jaggedly cut out Valentine's heart for a third grader's sweetheart. Hopefully I was smashing some of the illusions of this city they might have carried here. We're podunk in culture, not in population. The way she talked about it with Emily C; the anticipation, the sheer disbelief that they were doing this and had made it to Columbus even after breaking down in Chicago. I think the excitement was numbing her brain to the possible outcome and heartbreak that had every possibility of ensuing.

Skirting the edges of the murky Olentangy, we dodged the bourgeois Clintonville cyclists clogging the trail on ridiculously expensive road bikes. We snickered at their spandex outfits as the sun shot through the foliage whizzing over our heads. I looked down for a second and noticed that Emily C. had been riding her bike wearing boots this whole time. Black leather motorcycle boots. That's so punk rock, much better biking apparel than spandex. I had to admit I was starting to have a crush on these Minnesotans.

"So I know one person that lives in Minneapolis," looking back up to Emily C's face. "I met her last summer when I was in Detroit. We hitch hiked together to Ann Arbor. I was going to visit friends who went to college there. She was hoping to find a ride back home there that week since our arrival coincided with the town's 7TH Annual Shopping Cart Races that I didn't want to miss that summer. You two might know her. Her name is Miriam." After the last syllable of the name ebbed of my tongue, they both looked at each other simultaneous and emitted the same shrill incredulous noise. I looked over at them, worried, mouth agape.

"What? Do you know her?" I inquired.

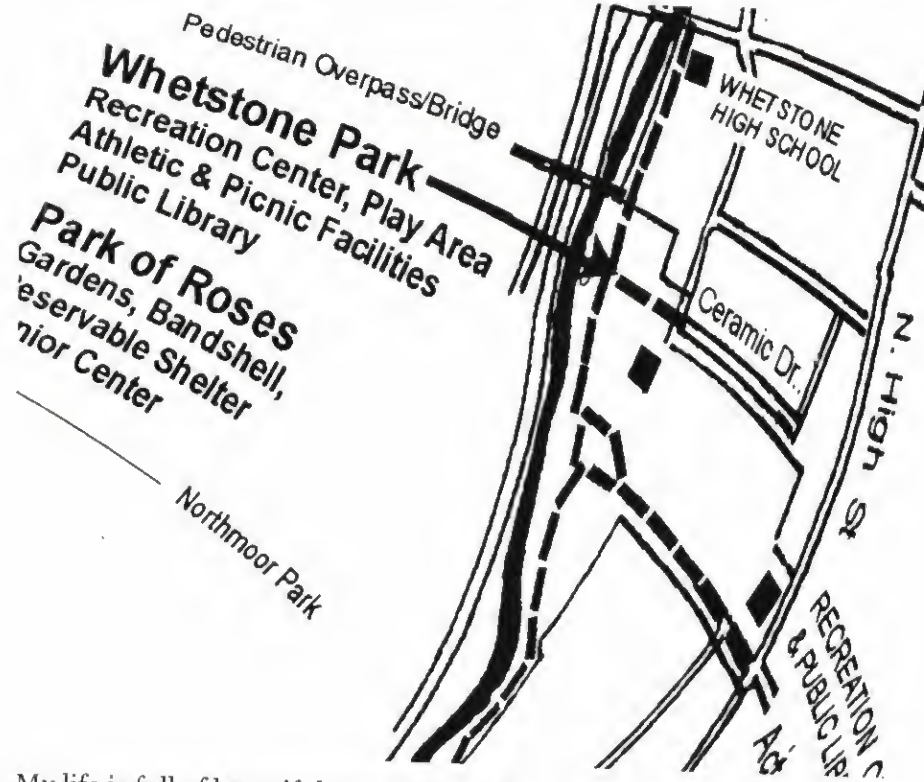
"Wait, wait, WAIT a minute," Emily J's legs pedaled away as she squinted her eyes at me, astonished. "Are you I eat food 123 at hotmail dot com?"

It's not everyday that my identity is inquired about through my email address. In fact I think it was the first time. It must have taken me a good 10 seconds of mute confusion and bizarre facial expressions to grapple with their response and formulate my own. "What the fuck? yeah that's me, huh?" Another round of shrill incredulous synchronized laughter ensued, "Do you know her or something?" I demanded.

"Do we know her?" Emily C. repeated my question aloud mouth agape, "Do we know her??"

"She's my ROOMATE!" Emily J. jumped in, taking the reigns of the conversation, "And not only that, but before we left on our trip to come here she gave us this email of this boy that she knew that lived in

Columbus, Ohio. She said how he was really nice and that we should contact him before we get here. Well that never happened, but it looks like we found I eat food 123 at hotmail dot com anyway." I just shook my head. Maybe I was meant all along to help them on their quest. Please don't call it destiny



My life is full of beautiful symmetries. This was not the first time something like this had occurred. Some consider punk merely to be an imbecilic subculture of outcasts and overactors wasting their lives away to a soundtrack of shitty, atonal music. Somehow the stereotypes forget to mention all the little inspiring things. These are the actions that fall outside the encyclopedia definition of audio, attitude and aesthetics. Its why it's still around corrupting the youth of suburbia in 2005. I've come to realize that punk is a multiplicity. It's a hard to locate in its overlapping pattern of concentric circles; a ven diagram of friendship groups bound by the same love for a sound that responsible parents don't want their kids listening to. It's a looseknit community. One that's based on mutual aid, cooperation and making the most of short comings. Every one of those circles is part of a bike chain, fused by amazing friendships and stories, hurling us forward together. I felt so comfortable and at ease with these two people I hadn't known untill that day. Punks have this shared experience through the mutual realizations about a dominant culture they reject. It's so much more than music. I am reminded, gliding away between them on bikes, the ease of friendship and the trust we have for one another because of it.

**OSU WETLAND
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WETLAND HABITAT
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Dodridge St

9.

Later that night I was hanging out outside of Bernie's Distillery. I was trying to escape the smoke between sets, while the next group set up. Swedish hardcore band, Skitsystem, was playing that night. I had been dancing like a ballerina with a friend to counteract the macho aggression of the young'uns trying to prove something about themselves with their extreme embodiment of hardcore dancing. Leaning against the concrete façade of Bernie's I chatted with my pals. Sweat evaporated off our skin and joined the haze. Something on the kiosk on the other side of the sidewalk caught my attention. I squinted to see if it was what I thought it was. "Where the hell is Bobby Joe Scarecrow" the flyer demanded in whimsical lettering. It was what that co-worker had spotted earlier. This is when, from the corner of my vision, I recognized two familiar faces approaching.

"He wasn't there," Emily J. looked unhappier than I had ever have imagined. For that matter, so did Emily C. Their body language spelled exhaustion.

"Huh, what do you mean," I replied, no merry greetings between us.

"He had already gotten off work by the time we got there," She explained. I guess all the dilly dallying we did that afternoon ruined it for them. I dare not admit the thought they most likely shared.

"Were just gonna go to his house and wait for him. Girlfriend or not." I tried smiling.

"I'm sorry. Good luck." The second time saying it now, this time I really meant it. With that they trudged on. I would not hear from them until months later.

I walked over to the kiosk and looked at the flyer more closely. A let out a little sardonic laugh, barely audible and began to carefully untape it. I folded the flyer up and placed it in my rear pocket.

They never showed at the party the next night. Between the shitty bands, the jumping out the second story window onto a mattress below, fireworks battles and plastic cupfuls of PBR, that last person I expected

I was so wrapped up in all of this. I had seriously begun to identifying with the plight of our heroine. I couldn't help but feel I was going to be crushed as well if Bobby Joe rejected Emily. I was experiencing a level of vicariousness. How did I effortlessly become so intertwined with "the quest"? Somewhere I was tapping into endless energy that continued to animate my body. It propelled me forward, spinning the chainrings of my bike, flying effortlessly up High street. In the last minutes that I spent with my two new friends, there was nothing else that I wanted more in the world than Bobby Joe to run away with Emily J. Where this would leave Emily C, I do not know, but I guess she knew where she stood. She was along for the ride. Deep down, I think she is the true heroine of this story. Without her it never would have happened. These are the kinds of people we need in our lives. Maybe they have more worth than any lover could amount to. Those that will drop everything for a week to go on your ridiculous, poorly planned adventures with you, and love every minute of it just as much as you do. From the economics of better judgment we must blindfold ourselves. Punk rock manifest itself the best when it becomes this blindness. To exuberantly catapult yourself through life chasing all that which is most elusive. To blindly follow your friends because walking alone is slow type of death. Sometimes in a world completely out of control, devotion to those closest to us is all we have. To jump into that lake, to gas up that Cadillac, to cross that street. To take all the necessary actions. We are given opportunities to live, but they often don't appear to be what would be the "best" ideas at the time. However all that manifests itself, somehow the way that punks live their lives are attuned to these ideals. To me punk's mantra of "No Future" is that our future will be in our own handwriting. Whether chasing your long lost love or fighting against a system you know is wrong. We are given hearts in order to follow them. This story is not just about a boy and the girl that tried to find him. Though, it is no doubt a love story.

The beauty of actions that Emily and Emily had set out upon is that it is not relegated to themselves. In moments like this one that I usually find myself wrapped up in is what reminds me I must get up for grey mornings. Sometimes they give you something good. Like how every once in a while it's usually some punk on those days that reminds me how love should be; ragged, desperate, painfully honest. Our insignificant lives can become immortalized in the grandest of our actions. Moments like this are hope. Hope that love may still exist. That it may exist in ways I never thought possible. Moments like this radiate outward and forever change everything that they touch Moments like this are bigger than me. They're bigger than the three of us looking for this lost boy. They're even bigger than Emily J's love for Bobby. Moments like this I realized, upon the brink of exhaustion tearing ass up High Street, transcend the punk rock love story we've been acting out. And this moment is not privy to the punks alone. Punk is just the lens in which Aaron Cometbus discovered the pure moments for the first time. I was discovering it through the same one just shy of two decades later. In all our blindness I can see clearly.

Sometimes we actually do find love like no pop culture reference can articulate. This bike ride was becoming one such link in the chain.

5.

Without us even noticing, we had breezed past Tuttle Park, the OSU wetlands research area, the big fake Indian mound and my beloved Park of Roses.

"These are some of my favorite places in Columbus" I yelled as we passed. In the early spring I would go to marvel at the carpeting of blooming native wildflowers at the research wetlands just steps from the boundless asphalt of the city. We were nearing the suburb of Worthington. Lost in our conversations, we had arrived at the end of the trail, a big muddy reservoir. When I looked out over the body of water known as Antrim Lake, I saw a man-made swamp for neurotic suburbanites to power walk around. When the Emilies eyes graced its shores, they must have seen a Midwestern oasis. Everything seems better than what it is when you are traveling.

"We need to go swimming" To my horror these words had burst from Emily C's mouth. I tried pleading with them,

"It was next to a highway over there we can here and that it had no tributary creeks."

"So?" was their response.

"There is probably six years of duck poop accumulating on the bottom and it doesn't need stirring up."

"So," Like an echo.

"No one I know had ever swam in it and there are all sorts of folks out walking about."

"....." They looked at me silly, "SO!" Intoxicated by the mellow rays of the sun that afternoon and the heat of the peddling we had just done, they were going in.

Watching them stripping off their clothes, sitting there and not joining in, I felt like a jerk. It just wouldn't be right for me not to swim, especially when I would have been clothed and sitting on the shore, watching them nakedly float away.

"That creepy" I contemplated as I began to take my shirt off, reflecting the sun's glory back to it. I didn't like the dynamics. If someone's going to be naked in front of me, it's only fair for me to be as well. And plus, the muck at the bottom of the Lake Antrim did need stirring up I decided.

"Looks like I'm swimming after all," I yelled.

We paddled around for awhile and floated on our backs. The discolored waters surrounded my sweaty form, soothing the accumulated heat of the ride. I couldn't tell it was so dirty when I was in the water. I was happy I had entered. I submerged myself and felt the coolness absorb into my dreadlocks.

We all sat on the bank for awhile. We smoked cigarettes, read books, day dreamed and shared stories about our respective cities. I was very interested in their perspectives about the punk experience of a city I've never been to, though wondered about often. No doubt our lives shared many similarities without us have ever of meeting. This commonality is one of the beauties of punk but I was more interested in why this Bobby Joe character. I wanted to know why he was so incomparable.

"Why take such a risk?" I asked, "Why did you come all this way?"

"I already told you, I'm in love with him," Emily J responded, smiling once again.

"Well..yeah, but, what made you fall in love with him?" She took a drag on the cigarette and look out over the water,

"The day I saw him in that store happened to be his birthday. I over heard him tell the cashier in the antique store it was his birthday. Something about him caught my eye. He was so skinny and kind sounding when he spoke to the lady at the counter. There was energy about him, I yelled "happy birthday" at him as he left the store but he just smiled. When I left the shop and began to walk down the street, the next thing I knew he was talking to me. He had run up the street to me. I fell in love with him." Smoke drifted from her nose, she looked me toward me again.

"He was doing an apprenticeship at a tattoo shop there, but he took the rest of the week off and we were with each other the whole time until I had to leave. We talked nearly everyday for a month and he promised he was going to come and find me in Minneapolis. That's when he broke his apprenticeship and sold all his stuff and bought a bus ticket to Columbus, where a friend was going to drive him the rest of the way." The words of her tale were mesmerizing; I couldn't believe that people's lives unfolded like this. She continued,

"The shop wasn't happy about it and they tried to injure his hands in retaliation. They took the rest of his stuff as repayment for his training. Bobby was on his way to find me. We were so close to running away together. He was scammed out of what money he had on him by a man at the greyhound station in New York en route. Upon making it to Columbus his friend bailed on him. Bobby had no money. He knew nobody. He was stuck in Columbus. And he's been here ever since." The weight of her words would take awhile to settle within me. I took my gaze off of the rippling surface of the lake.

"You're really in love with him, aren't you?" The response seemed automatic, the most earnest thing I said all day.

"Yes, I knew the first time I saw him, he's the one," I knew at that moment I would do everything in my ability to make sure Emily would find that boy.

8.

The quality of the buildings facades began to change as we cycled furiously. We were passing through the yuppie paradise of the gentrified Short North. We were very close now to the boy that was the reason for this whole escapade. The video camera case was slung across Emily J's back now. I cringed, trying to sound positive above the roar of traffic,

"I hope this was going to turn out OK". As I began to tire, my giddiness was beginning to wear off. Fucking Christ, Didn't they realize Bobby had a girl friend now? I'm not sure what that meant. This doubt signaled the need to hang a left and we did, cutting through a side street that opened up into a vast parking area. Behind the lot laid a converted warehouse. Its huge yellow letters, separated by a huge emblematic rooster, spelled out NORTH MARKET.

"There it is," cracking a irresistible smile as I turned to face them. The last battle was before us. The whole reason for all for all this. The North Market was the final citadel, the awaited climax of our quest looming before us. I feared what lay inside; a dragon, a demon or Bobby Joe serving up a hot slice of utter heartbreak at Sarafino's? You chose which you would rather confront? I felt like I had been enacting many years of playing Dungeons and Dragons and reading Tolkien. The market austere imposed in the distance. I feared what was to come next.

"Sarafino's is inside as well as many other vendors." The North Market is like the mall food court but for urban elites instead of dispossessed teenagers looking to make out in the bathroom. I'm not certain if the yuppies sloppily French kiss in the restroom stalls or not. "You'll find him eventually. I must let you two go alone from here on out. I have done my part in getting you here. The rest lies with you."

"Are you sure?" They asked.

"Yes, I am sure. I have no place in there. It would just be weird for me. I must bid thee fare well. It has been an awesome day and I wish you luck" I was trying to sound as epic as possible. "Be sure to say hi to Miriam for me. Good bye!" Before heading back home I decided to check if the young executives swap spit in the restrooms like the mallrats do.

With that the events of the day began to swirl around me. Their goodbyes got lost as I tried to tear myself away from this fantasy. I smiled, we embraced and I turned away from the North Market. Their fate was their own from now on. I pushed down hard on my pedals and raced back home up High Street. I needed to lie down.

back from the place I tried to bury it. I wanted to forget but the interview had caused it to bloom defiantly. It was the punk rock love that should have been. Just like all those pop punk love ballads, we in punkdom try so hard to live our lives like those two minutes blasts of passion. Sometimes it is as sweet as those 7 inch slabs of vinyl. But I lately I fear, we're just like everybody else, prone to the same destructive tendencies. It's a fear that is not yet convincing enough for me to accept society's habits I swore to reject. I have not gotten to this point yet and don't think I ever want to. Yet I still feel this way. My actions sabotage my intentions every time.

I think this is why I became so intune with Emily J's quest. I was eager and joined in. With the little thought I had given to it, it was more a reaction than a choice. I want those moments in all those punk rock songs to come true. And not just for me. I want it for all those that have been in love with punk rock since the first time they heard its impassioned and frantic cadences. Punk is more than just about rebellion. It's love, despite everything. Something deep inside me had indelibly changed from all the years of trusting punk rock records. Wanting to embrace the punk rock life style, they would forever hijack all hopes for my economic security. But if it was to find it anywhere, "true love" if there ever would be such a thing, was going to be found amongst the punks. Against all the warning signs, I wanted this quest to work out. Something in the pauses between her words told me that Emily was searching for the same things I had been searching for all along. Maybe the crashing extinguishment of my prior summer's romance had a lot to do with my desire to see this punk rock love story end happily ever after. Was this one of Cometbus's pure moments? Even though I was not the one in love here in the highest of the romantic sense, I was in love with this quest. The next thing I knew, we were clambering back upon our bikes to set off down High Street.



6.

Emily C. came back from the water and sat with us for awhile. They told me about their ethnically diverse neighborhoods, how much they love their city and the different kinds of characters that inhabit it. The best one of all was the Black Label Bike Club. Black Label is a type of beer, which can also be found in Columbus, that is notoriously cheap. This group of punks there started a gang which rides solely what are known as "tall bikes". They comprise of two bike frames that are welded on top of each other which runs on a tandem chain. These hoologans are legendary for their alcohol consumption and annual hundred person, babies included, bike trips. Every year they hijack the May Day parade and ride in the front of it to the chagrin of the trade unions and leftist organizations. There is also a rival tall bike gang called the Scallywags. They are Christians and do not drink. Sometimes they have tall bike jousting matches together. They are just as obnoxious and punk as Black Label. This reason I guess is why they get along

Emily J. and I decided to go back in for another dip while Emily C. dug out her camera. She took a few pictures of us trying to swim. A mid thirties Worthingtonian yuppie on the path called out to the Emily on the shore.

"Hi there, would you like for me to take a picture of you with your friends." He tried to disrupt the inherent creepiness of the proposition by pretending to be stretching. Emily C, who was still topless, stared him down and replied with a cool,

"No." The pervert continued to stretch, take his pulse and pretend to look at his watch. He was not doing a very good job hiding the fact that he was staring at her boobs. Emily C. stared him down the whole time, dauntless, until he decided to jog off nonchalantly.

"That," I broke the silence, "Is why we don't go swimming in Antrim Lake."

7.

We put some of our clothes back on and hit the bike path again. Next I was taking them to get free smoothies. Minutes within resuming our ride back, Emily J's cell phone began to ring in her bag. We stopped as she answered it, hoping it was Bobby Joe. It wasn't. It was just as good though. The person on the phone had seen the flyers that the Emilies had put. The first evening they arrived, Emily and Emily made flyers soliciting any information on the whereabouts of Bobby Joe Scarecrow. Over Falafel Burritos at Taco Ninja, the duo constructed the flyer which resembled a whimsical take on those pictures of missing children on milk cartons. When I ran into them they had just completed putting up copies of this flyer. The informant on the phone worked with lover boy downtown. His name was also Brian. Once again, way to go parents of the early 80's, real fing original.

"I just found out where Bobby Joe works!" Emily J. yelled. "It's at some place called Sarafino's, do you know where that is Brian?" "I do," I replied, "And I'll take you there, but first we must get free smoothies from Wild Oats."

"Okay, let me first put my jeans back on."

In retrospect we should have darted to Sarafino's as quickly as we could. Bobby Joe was within our grasps. What can I say in our defense? We were caught up in the anticipation of a perfectly homogeneous fruit/soy milk mixture dripping coolly down our throats. Any and every free cookie, t-shirt or couch means that much less time working and more time venturing across the country trying to track down your misplaced lovers. Even when their lives depend upon it, punks cannot resist free stuff. When it comes to things as edible and delicious as said smoothies, the punks are as good as dead.

And boy were they delicious. My friend Ally who works the juice bar had no complications with giving me or any of my friends smoothies. And I had no complications with getting anything for free, by any means necessary, from this huge anti-union corporation that is putting local organic grocers and co-ops out of business. It may not change much, but at least spitting this deceptive business feels good. Our trio slurped our beverages and chatted with our Wild Oats insider. I told them all to come to the party taking place at the address that I gave them the day before. There was going to be shitty atonal bands and a keg of Pabst Blue Ribbon. I told them to bring Bobby Joe while they were at it. We were all pretty giddy with the prospects of finding resolution at last with Bobby Joe. It lay at the end of our bike ride, on the other end of High Street.

Before we could make it down to Sarafino's in the North Market, we had another stop to make. It was getting late, already nearing four o'clock. We needed to get my interview for the documentary they mentioned earlier out of the way. They asked if I would do it, like I had a choice, and of course I agreed. When our smoothies were finished, we said goodbye to Ally and rode back to the house they had camped behind. They took their camera and sandwich making supplies from the trunk of the beast of a car that got them here, Emily J's grey '84 Cadillac. Looking at this antique, it's amazing how it ever got this far. Yet it did and I as well as my two companions and hopefully Bobby Joe would be happy for it.

Sandwich in hand, they turned the camera upon me. The red light atop it blinked on.

"So do you believe in love at first sight?" Emily J laid the question down upon me while Emily C. wielded the camera. Right before I went they interviewed the fellow whose backyard they were staying at. His name was Bob. He was a hipster and a Christian. Notoriously drunken, treating Larry's bar like his living room, Bob was quite the character. He was just married but we all suspected he was secretly, and frustratingly, in the closet. Drunk on Milwaukee's Best at the time of the interview, he went,

"Every one of my girlfriends, I was in love with each one at first sight." It was a forthright statement with a slight slur to his speech. I started laughing in the background and quickly tried to suppress myself.

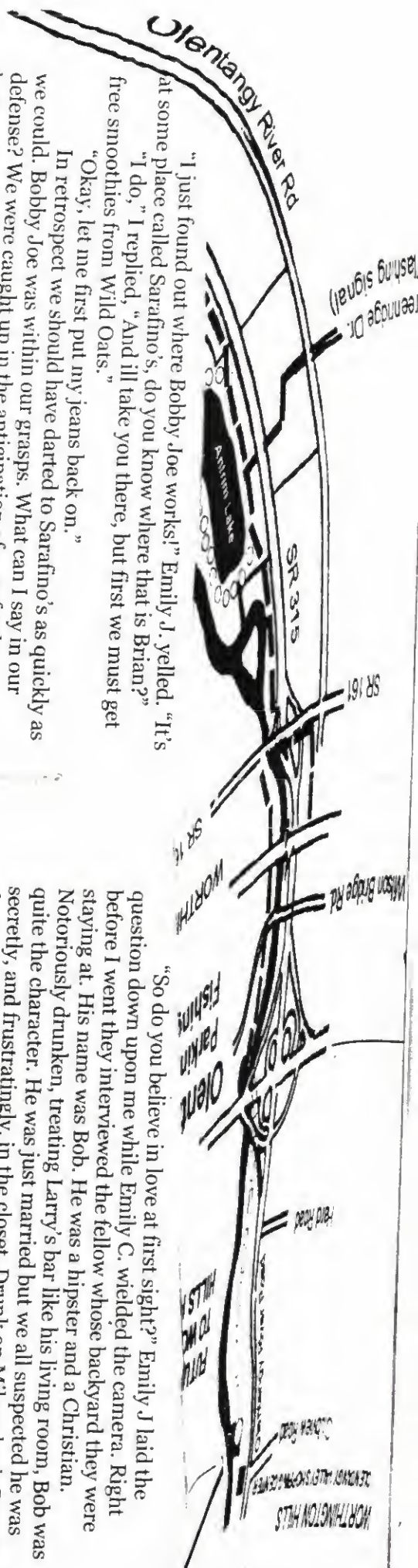
Now it was my turn, red light cutting a hole into my forehead. I was feeling bitter from the summer and my greater history of disastrous romantic intrigues. I didn't want to answer this question. With the camera accumulating my silence, I let it all out.

"Images are falsest of all things in this world." Did those words really just come out of my mouth, undaunted my lips continued on? "We construct our own social identities to display to the world, making up for our short comings and fears. Especially in a subculture, we are so hung up on posturing. How we can we trust our outward appearances?" Fuck, and I just didn't stop, I was not relenting one bit as the Emilies munched on sandwiches and continued recording. "It's dangerous. Putting so much faith in it is likely only to lead to disappointments. I've had too many experiences to trust first impressions, let alone first glances. I think love comes from exploring someone's personality and actions over time. We learn to love and this kind of love means so much more to me."

"Awesome," They shut the camera, thanking me for being part of their story.

"Awesome?" I thought. I didn't feel awesome about what just came out of my mouth. How horribly misanthropic it must have all sounded. I was so embarrassed when that little red light flashed off. I apologized that my words weren't as romantic as what they probably hoped on. Did I even believe in love? Last summer was digging its way

**Do not block the trail and or
Keep right; pass on the left
Yield when entering and or
Prohibited when
must be leashed and or
Be courteous**



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

It's been over a year since that fateful meeting at 14th and High. Much has changed in the lives of our protagonists in such a short time. Bobby Joe left Columbus with everything to his name crammed in an old VW bus. He said he was heading to Olympia to work on a mushroom farm. Emily C went on her own cross country quest not so long after these events transpired. Unlike her companion, she found what she wanted at the end of hers. Emily C returned to Minneapolis to find amazing news, that she was going to have a baby. She, ironically, now lives in the same small westcoast town that Bobby Joe relocated to. to be with her love and have their baby. Emily Jean can be

found in that bitter north metropolis clad head to toe in white. Before the Scarecrow made it to his new beginning rumours have it that he found her along the way and things were much different than like they were in Columbus. Your humble narrator, he is not so far from where this story left him. You could say that he found something sorta like what he romanticized among these pages. Valentine's day is approaching again and he made a pinky swear with a certain someone to ignore this stupid holiday under all circumstances. Not because he is cynical but because he believes in things greater than what these holidays, these words could ever mean.

BD 2/12/06

